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THE DARK KNIGHT'S NEW DAWN

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TALE
OF THE
CAPE

WITH A NEW DIRECTOR, A SLEW OF OUTRAGEOUS VILLAINS AND A FRESH FACE BEHIND THE MASK, *BATMAN FOREVER* BOLDLY RE-ENVISIONS ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SAGAS IN MOVIE HISTORY. HERE'S THE STORY BEHIND THE DARK KNIGHT'S THIRD FEATURE FLIGHT

BY DEAN LAMANNA

The tent rising more than 60 feet inside Stage 16 on the Warner Bros. backlot in Burbank, Calif., would seem the perfect wrap party site for the year's most anticipated movie. But no mere studio fete is unfolding within: On this sixth day of March—the 106th shooting day of the studio's $60-million-plus production of *Batman Forever*—the soundstage is doubling as an art deco coliseum called the Hippodrome. Inside the tent's black-and-white-striped walls the Gotham Charity Circus is running full tilt. The Fellini-esque ring, surrounded by six Herculean statues holding giant red drums and bleachers spilling over with Gotham City's social elite, is a kaleidoscope of sweeping blue-and-white spotlights with star-shaped beams. The Flying Graysons—Mom, Pop, Chris and Dick—are performing trapeze acrobatics to the crowd's thunderous approval.

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Without warning, confusion erupts amid the din as escaped mental patient Harvey Dent/Two-Face—determined to find his archrival, Batman, who's somewhere in the crowd—crashes the affair. The villain's black-leather thugs swing from the ceiling of the tent on ropes, throwing off the aerialists' carefully timed routine and causing all of the family members, save for Dick Grayson, to fall to their deaths.

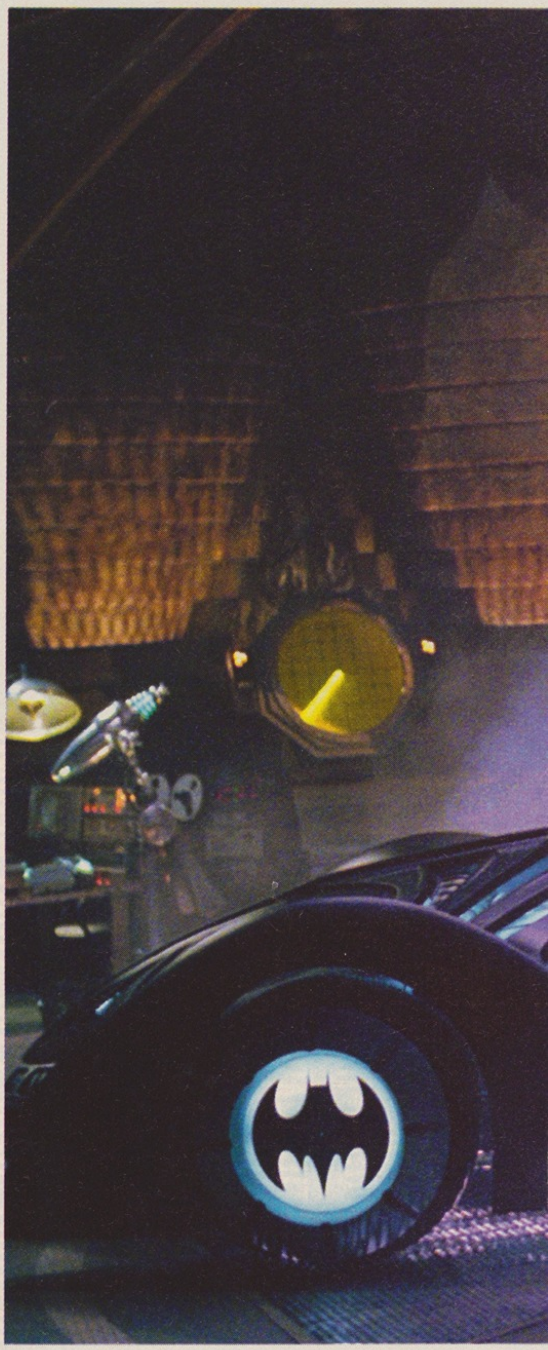
It's a pivotal scene that will unspool early on in *Batman Forever*—one that, when fully shot, will feature more than 150 actors, stuntmen and extras and will effectively introduce Batman's sidekick, Robin, in the character of Dick Grayson. But the importance of the setup doesn't prevent director Joel Schumacher from showing off the film's trailer for some visitors between takes. "Is the volume up?" says the ringmaster himself, perched on a director's chair in front of a trio of video monitors.

"Tomorrow's our last day of shooting," he announces as the fast-paced preview that has been whetting moviegoers' appetites for months zips across the screens.

The trailer ends, the visitors applaud. The film's release date pops up on the monitors. "Somebody better finish it—it's opening June 16!" Schumacher says with a laugh. As the group disperses, few hear the director's softer follow-up statement, which he utters with a slight shake of his head: "Every time I see that date ..."

CAPE FEARS

Making *Batman Forever* has been a long haul for Schumacher. By the time the film unfurls its gaudier, bawdier cape this month, it will be two years since Warner Bros. toppers Bob Daly and Terry Semel entrusted the pony-tailed 55-year-old with the studio's most-prized franchise. During



"INSTEAD OF HARVEY/ TWO-FACE JUST BEING CONSERVATIVE ON ONE SIDE AND INSANE ON THE OTHER, HE'S NOW CONSERVATIVE ON ONE SIDE AND *OUTRAGEOUSLY* INSANE ON THE OTHER."

—JOEL SCHUMACHER

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that long, sustained blur, he turned John Grisham's *The Client* into a hit film for the same studio and coordinated the cast, crew and incredibly complex physical production of what is—and likely will remain—the biggest assignment of his career.

"I did think it would be a lot of fun to make a *Batman* movie," says the director, who, though energetic and easygoing to a fault, nevertheless harbored some concerns as he entered the realm of Michael Keaton's Dark Knight. The first involved Tim Burton, the helmer of *Batman* and *Batman Returns* and a close friend of Schumacher's. "I wanted to make sure it was something Tim wanted me to do," he says. "If he didn't want me to direct it, I wouldn't have done it. The only reason there *was* a third film was that Tim had done a great job with the first two. But he was dying for me to do it. Tim didn't want to do a third; he's such a great artist, and he wanted to go on to other projects."

Schumacher's second major concern was, in hindsight, a most unfounded one. "I thought, *Gee, I wonder if anyone's interested in a third* Batman? With all the heat on the movie now, it seems silly to say that. But I really didn't know. The second it was announced that we were doing a third *Batman*, I realized what a loyal following the character has."

Galvanized by the prospect of tackling and possibly retooling the popular icon, Schumacher threw himself into preproduction with the full support of Warner Bros., for which he had directed *The Lost Boys* and *Falling Down* in addition to *The Client*. "When a studio trusts you, and you've made successful pictures for them, they have a tendency to give you a lot of freedom," he says. "I showed them some preliminary sketches and models, and they seemed very excited. I don't know what they had in mind or if they had a vision of what they wanted; I think they were hoping that I would."

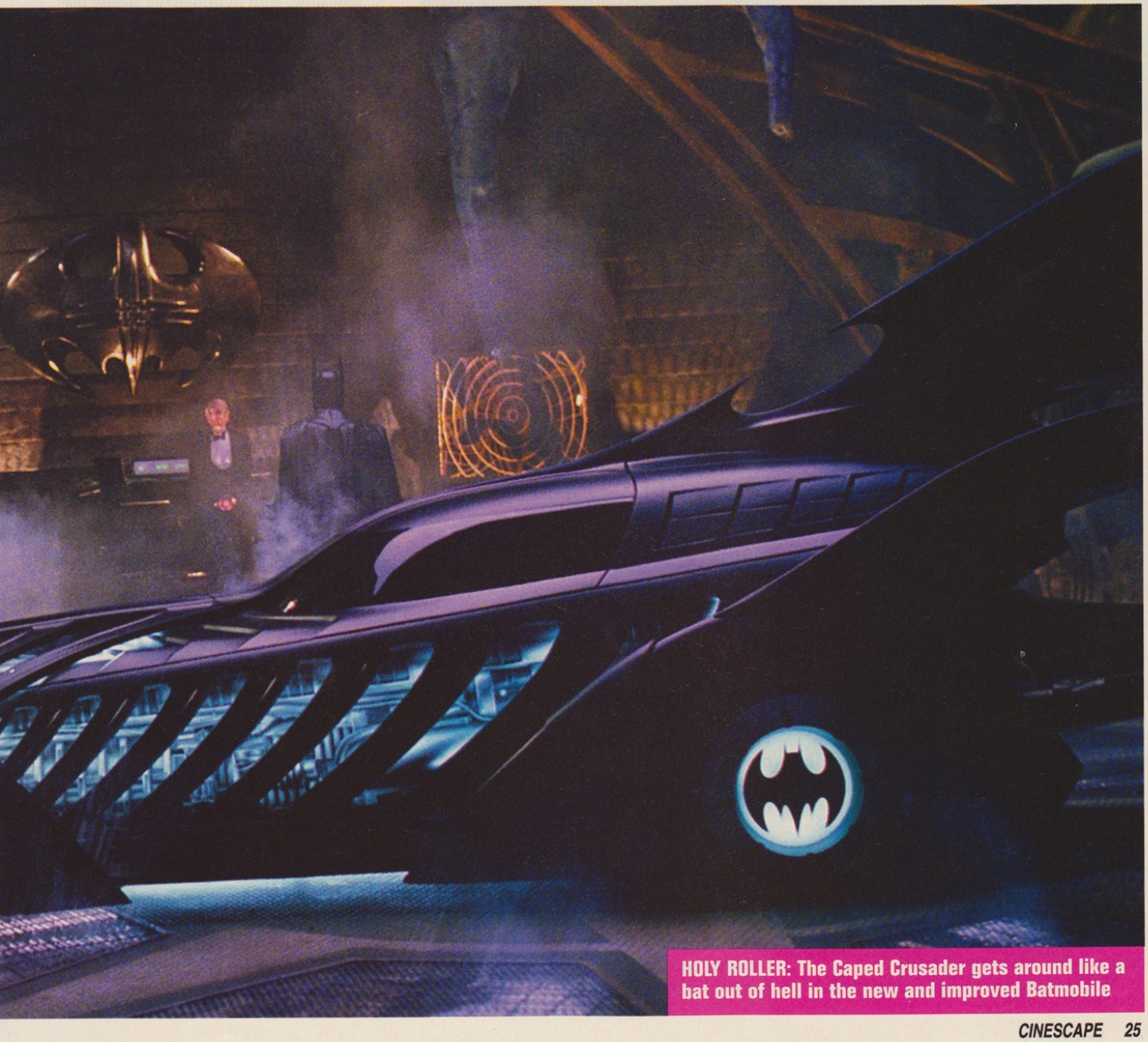
Tim Burton's relegation to producer on *Batman Forever* allowed Warner Bros. to leaven his dark vision, which reveled in the sewers of Gotham three years ago in *Batman Returns*. No one may have voiced it outright, but the studio sentiment—with apologies to Jack Nicholson's Joker—was evident:

This franchise needs an enema!

DYNAMIC DUALITY

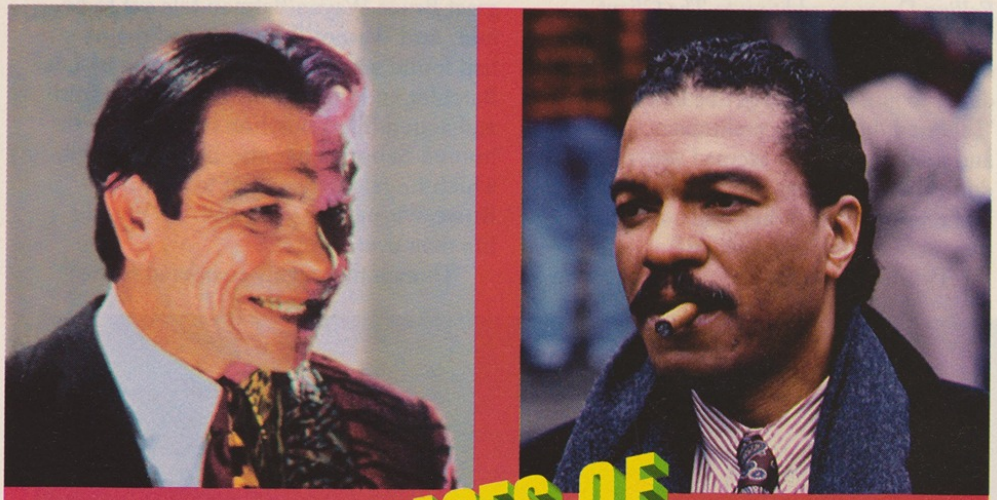
Everyone was confident that there was a great Bruce Wayne/Batman tale yet to be told. And Warner Bros. believed that it had found a winner in a screenplay by Lee Batchler and Janet Scott Batchler—a fresh and action-filled storyline brimming with humor. Schumacher also liked the script, which he felt came closer to showing Bruce Wayne grappling with his double life than ever before.

Though thoroughly enamored of the



HOLY ROLLER: The Caped Crusader gets around like a bat out of hell in the new and improved Batmobile

duality theme, the director expressed some reservations about the script in a meeting with the Batchlers in July 1993. "They wanted to have the Riddler, and I wanted to have Two-Face—an extraordinarily popular villain in the comics and in *Batman: The Animated Series*, which I think is excellent. I also wanted to bring the Robin character in. I wanted the script to be about dual personality because those villains and Robin, like Bruce Wayne/Batman, have two identities also."



THE TWO FACES OF HARVEY DENT

TOMMY LEE vs. BILLY DEE

"I don't see BILLY DEE WILLIAMS as the most evil, psychotic killer in Gotham City. He's a wonderful actor; I'm sure he could play it. But because he had never played Two-Face really—he played HARVEY DENT—I decided to go with TOMMY."

—Director JOEL SCHUMACHER

Within a short time, the Batchlers managed to devise an all-inclusive storyline. "[The basic plot] was hardly altered," marvels Schumacher. "Dialogue and scenes were altered, but they came up with a wonderful way to bring all these characters together. They pitched it to Tim and me on a conference call—we were all in different parts of the United States—and I gave them an okay right away." The revised screenplay draft was delivered early that fall.

With contractual obligations to another studio, the Batchlers left the project and Schumacher hired scripter Akiva Goldsman, with whom he'd worked fruitfully on *The Client*, to do a polish. "The script had come to a certain place, and it was my job then to bring it further," says Goldsman, who is writing and producing New Line's feature revival of *Lost in Space* and adapting John Grisham's *A Time to Kill* for Schumacher to direct this fall. A fan of *Batman* since early childhood, Goldsman "supersaturated" himself in the comics and graphic novels of Frank Miller and others—taking breaks from the reading only to review the first two movies and some of the cartoons. As a result of his indulgence, more mythic elements about the legends of both Batman and Robin were woven into the script.

The final screenplay draft—credited to the Batchlers and Goldsman—is, according to a studio source, a "festival of dualities" wherein the dreaded Harvey Dent/Two-Face (Tommy Lee Jones) escapes from Arkham Asylum to embark on a vendetta against Batman, who caused the ex-Gotham City D.A.'s disfigurement. Meanwhile, Edward Nygma/The Riddler (Jim Carrey), an employee of Wayne Enterprises, has a fanatical fixation on his boss: Disappointed by Bruce Wayne's lackluster response to a new invention of his, Nygma also becomes bent on vengeance. Feeling overwhelmed by this double trouble, Bruce Wayne/Batman feels compelled to hit the couch of Dr. Chase Meridian (Nicole Kidman), a criminal psychiatrist who specializes in dual personalities, to discuss the dichotomy of his own existence and his difficulties with his new ward, Dick Grayson/Robin (Chris O'Donnell).

"It's not really a sequel—it's a brand-new ball game," enthuses *Batman*'s 73-year-old creator, Bob Kane, who serves as creative consultant on the film. "The first two scripts were copies of one another: Jack Nicholson, as the Joker, and Danny DeVito, as the Penguin, both wanted to be mayor. So the second movie wasn't an original concept."

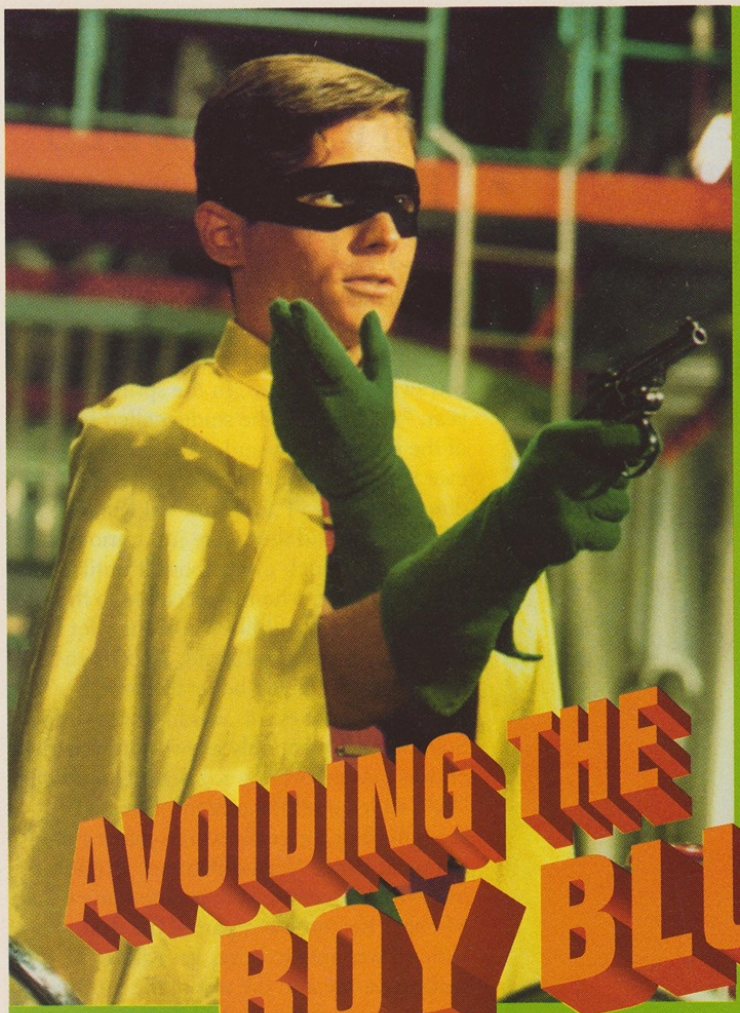
Last June, with Schumacher nearly finished casting this ambitious scenario, another Bat-drama arose when it was announced that Michael Keaton would not be donning the suit again. Although the 43-year-old actor had expressed enthusiasm about the third movie in public statements made just three months earlier, Keaton reportedly demanded between $10-15 million plus gross profit points and a slice of the merchandising pie—a reward that Warner Bros. apparently decided was too rich.

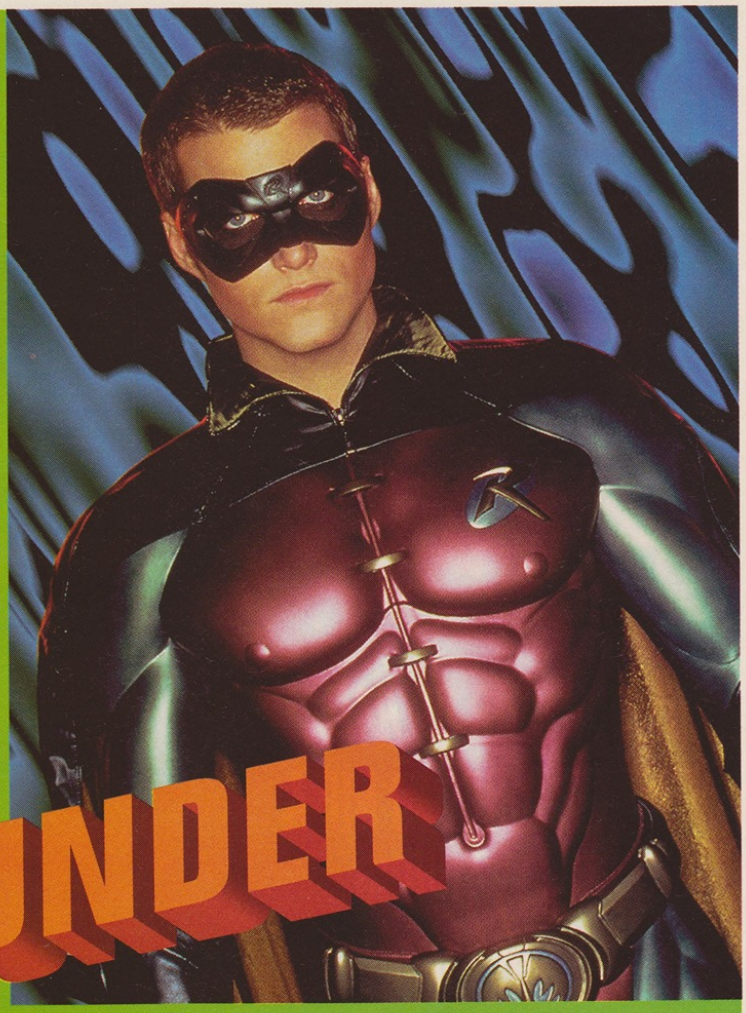
Keaton's producing partner, Harry Colomby, denied in a published report that salary was the bugaboo: "Not doing this movie means he probably gave up $30 million, based on his back-end deal." Other sources said Keaton was unhappy about his lack of creative sway over the film. According to one, following a meeting with Schumacher, "Michael was not feeling confident. ... He was worried that the character ... wasn't going to be developed the way he wanted it to be developed."

In a statement released by Warner Bros. in early July, Keaton said: "I look forward to having the opportunity to play a wide variety of roles of many genres. I hope that several of them will be at Warner Bros., where I've had terrific experiences, both with the *Batman* movies and with such other projects as *Clean and Sober* and *Beetlejuice*."

"Some people don't want to play superheroes the rest of their life," Schumacher shrugged at the time. "Even Sean Connery left James Bond." Today, the director steps gingerly when asked to describe the tenor of the Warner-Keaton talks. "I have to be very elegant about this," he says, proceeding to stammer inelegantly: "Let me ... I think that it is, um ... my responsibility is to take the higher ground here. I think it's important to stick to the studio line here, which is, you know, that at a certain point, you know. ..."

Using the word "considerations" as a





AVOIDING THE BOY BLUNDER

FORSAKING THE BRIGHT PLUMAGE AND EARNEST CHIRPINESS OF ROBIN'S PAST, THE NEW DICK GRAYSON IS LESS A SIDEKICK THAN A KICK IN THE SIDE

Holding court in a modestly furnished sitting room at the *Batman Forever* offices on the Warner Bros. lot, Chris O'Donnell is juiced about his role as Dick Grayson/Robin—which, for him, is a serious change of pace. "I'm no martial-arts guy, but I can kick a little bit," says the affable actor, 25, who hit it big three years ago in *Scent of a Woman* and earned raves for his work in the recent drama *Circle of Friends*. "I got to drive the Batmobile and the Batboat. They didn't trust me in the Batwing, though!"

To hear O'Donnell describe him, Robin no longer is the unflaggingly faithful, squeaky-clean tag-along that most Batfans know from television reruns. In fact, he has become a true Generation Xer—presenting "older brother" Batman with an edgy crimefighting partner. "Dick Grayson is a tough kid who has grown up on the road. Bruce Wayne is the kind of rich guy he just resents."

"Grayson is no longer a wide-eyed innocent," confirms Joel Schumacher, who wanted to avoid the "shallow and silly" Robin popularized by Bruce Ward in the 1960s TV series. "Circus kids travel, so they have to be able to take care of themselves."

The director, a former costume artist, felt that the revised character called for a radically new get-up. "Not only is Batman's costume beautiful," he says, "it gives you camouflage at night. It doesn't make sense for Robin to go out in the dark in electric yellow and green. So I created a suit like Batman's."

Schumacher, unwilling to banish the fast-foodish color scheme completely, incorporated it into the Flying Graysons' performance togs. Quips O'Donnell: "I'm bringing that Spandex number home. Thanksgiving dinner will never be the same."

Apart from the circus outfit, Schumacher wanted Robin to have a less clean-cut, more Europunk look. "Joel's vision was of these guys in cut-off sleeves and leather jackets who hitchhike around Europe," O'Donnell says. "I guess he wanted to make him kind of sexy, you know?"

Yet "sexy" to some can mean "deviant" to others. *Batman* creator Bob Kane, for one, wasn't having any small, gold hoop dreams about Grayson's earring. "He didn't understand it," says O'Donnell, chuckling. "I told him, 'Don't worry, it's on the left ear. It's okay.'"

"It bothered me because I've never liked seeing an earring in a young kid's ear, but I went along with it," says Kane, who thinks O'Donnell is "a hell of an actor. He's still very manly, even with the earring." (The hip accessory, incidentally, comes off when Grayson becomes Robin.)

O'Donnell thinks it would be "cool" if the character got his own franchise—including personalized gadgets and a snazzy mode of transportation. He also wouldn't mind seeing Robin stalked through the back alleys of Gotham by a certain feral feline. "I bet Catwoman and I could create a serious romance," he says with a mild leer. "At least I'd be willing to try."—*DL*

TIT FOR BAT

THE DIRECTOR OF *BATMAN FOREVER* TRIES TO NIP A POTENTIALLY TURGID CONTROVERSY IN THE BUD

Hollywood is always rife with breast-beating when the studios throw open their summer publicity war chests. And sometimes the hype tweaks the public interest in strange, unexpected ways. Take, for instance, the brewing brouhaha over Bob Ringwood's new design for Bruce Wayne's vigilante uniform in *Batman Forever*. Not only is the get-up more buff, more sleek and more chic than in previous outings, it has—*clutch thy bosom!*—nipples.

"The suit is like a second skin; it's anatomy," explains Joel Schumacher, no doubt bracing for the onslaught of late-night TV jokes about Batman sporting Bat-bras and breast-feeding Robin. "It has the beautiful musculature of an idealized human body, including fantastic abs, an incredible collarbone—all the ideal anatomical features of a great statue, of a living statue. So why wouldn't it have nipples? Are men's nipples a hot subject in America? Wait until [audiences] see the Bat-butt. There's a shot of it as Bruce Wayne is getting dressed in his suit. It'll be scandalous."

Suddenly, the director's incredulity trips over into bemused hysteria. "I mean, after *Basic Instinct*, what are we talking about?" he says. "Isn't this an era where people are opening their legs in movies? And we're talking about rubber nipples on the Batsuit? I love it! *I love it!* I feel so ... so *dangerous*. I'll probably be on *Nightline*, like Oliver Stone, talking about the Batman nipples. This will be like the grassy knoll [in Stone's Kennedy assassination theory]: Oliver has the grassy knoll, and I have nipples. Well, the punishment fits the crime, I guess. You can see where my mind has been all these years." And the public's.—*DL*

euphemism for "demands," Schumacher finally bites the bullet. "Well, the truth is that Michael came into this with many considerations that really had nothing to do with me at all because we hardly know each other. A lot of it was based on the past. He had so many considerations that I think it gave Warner Bros. and me our own considerations. And at a certain point we all shook hands and walked separate ways.

"Certainly, everybody at Warner Bros. is very fond of Michael and only wishes him well," he continues. "Certainly, I've always been a fan of his and I wish him well. It's difficult ... because there is an erroneous idea that somehow we had creative differences on the concept of this movie and he walked away. But it never even got that far."

A VAL(ue)-ADDED HERO

However far the talks actually got, Schumacher was happy to start with a clean slate. The search for a replacement, in fact, was swift and painless. In the spring of last year, "the heads of the studio called me out of the blue one day and asked me if I had ever thought of anyone else in the role," the director recalls. "I said, 'Yes, Val Kilmer. Why?' They said they were just curious. So I didn't think much more about it until a couple weeks later, when I was called to their offices. 'Do you still like Val Kilmer for this role?' they asked. And I said, 'Absolutely.' They said, 'Well, you better ask him.'"

This turn of events was like deja vu for Schumacher who, only a few months earlier, was bowled over by Kilmer in *Tombstone*. "Val just leapt off the screen," he says. "I thought, 'Boy, he really would make a phenomenal Bruce Wayne/Batman.' But I was just musing because at that time I knew that Michael Keaton was a part of the deal. When I was able to bring Val Kilmer in, it really gave me and the rest of the creative team an opportunity to feel that we were doing a new [movie] instead of a sequel."

Bringing Kilmer in was, alas, a tricky undertaking in itself. "Finding Val was very difficult," explains Schumacher, "because he was in the middle of the African bush researching a screenplay he was writing about a man living with primitive tribes. It took his agent about three days to track him down, and when they found him, he was in—believe it or not—a bat cave! They got him onto some phone and his agent said, 'Joel Schumacher wants you to play Batman.' And he said, 'Tell Joel yes!'"

While maintaining that both Kilmer and Michael Keaton are "extraordinary talents," Schumacher notes that the former does much more than merely replace the latter inside the Batsuit. "A 34-year-old Bruce Wayne who dresses up and goes out at night as Batman is a different person," he says, adding: "Having played Jim Morrison [in Oliver Stone's 1991 biopic *The Doors*] and Doc Holliday, among other great roles, Val's capable of great depth and sensitivity. He has a complexity and an intelligence that is interesting to watch. He's got humor—and he looks great in that suit."

Bob Kane agrees. "Michael did well with what he possesses physically, but Val's more Batmanesque: He's suave and laid back, and he personifies Batman and Bruce Wayne more than Michael, who frankly doesn't have the chiseled characteristics I drew in the comic book."

Kilmer also torques up the oft-neglected

libido of Bruce Wayne. "He's more sensual," Kane says. "He's more Valentino—he's handsome in a movie-star way, where Michael Keaton is the boy next door. His derring-do deeds are very acrobatic, too; he does a lot of his own stunts."

Or at least as many as humanly possible in Batman's 40-pound, latex-based outfit, which costume designer Bob Ringwood has likened to "a large makeup sponge." Kilmer himself has described the experience of wearing it vividly: "You put that thing on and you want to inflict pain, it's so cumbersome."

Batman Forever places greater emphasis on martial arts than the earlier movies and contains "a great deal of action," acknowledges Schumacher. "Everybody—and probably most of all Val—had to be in great shape. We made the suit much more flexible, much more body-conscious, but it's still very heavy; your skin doesn't breathe in it. Val did this one big martial-arts sequence where he did 98 percent of the whole scene—all the kicks, everything—in the suit and the cape. Which is no small feat, let me tell you. He brought a great deal of energy, commitment and virility to the film."

Helping to stir that virility is criminal psychiatrist Dr. Chase Meridian, played by an exceptionally alluring Nicole Kidman (who bested, among others, Jeanne Tripplehorn and Linda Hamilton for the part). "Yes, in my Gotham City that's what criminal psychiatrists look like—it's better than Dr. Ruth!" Schumacher defends, revealing: "Dr. Meridian is in love with Batman, and Bruce Wayne's in love with her. She's in a triangle with the same man and doesn't know it." So does the good doctor have an easier time slipping between Batman and his skintight latex skivvies than Vicki Vale? "You'll have to see the movie," he says coyly.

Perhaps it is the Caped Crusader's new, more anatomically correct body suit that turns Dr. Meridian's horn up (see sidebar, page 28). "Yeah, the Batman suit has nipples, and so does the Robin suit," says Schumacher, with the weary laugh of someone who has debated the finer points of male mammary glands ad nauseam. "Bob Kane, who has been the most supportive person to me in making this film, still doesn't understand why the costumes have nipples and why Robin wears an earring."

CALL HER DOCTOR LOVE: Nicole Kidman

WHAT LITTLE GIRLS ARE MADE OF: Sugar (Drew Barrymore) and Spice (Debi Mazar)

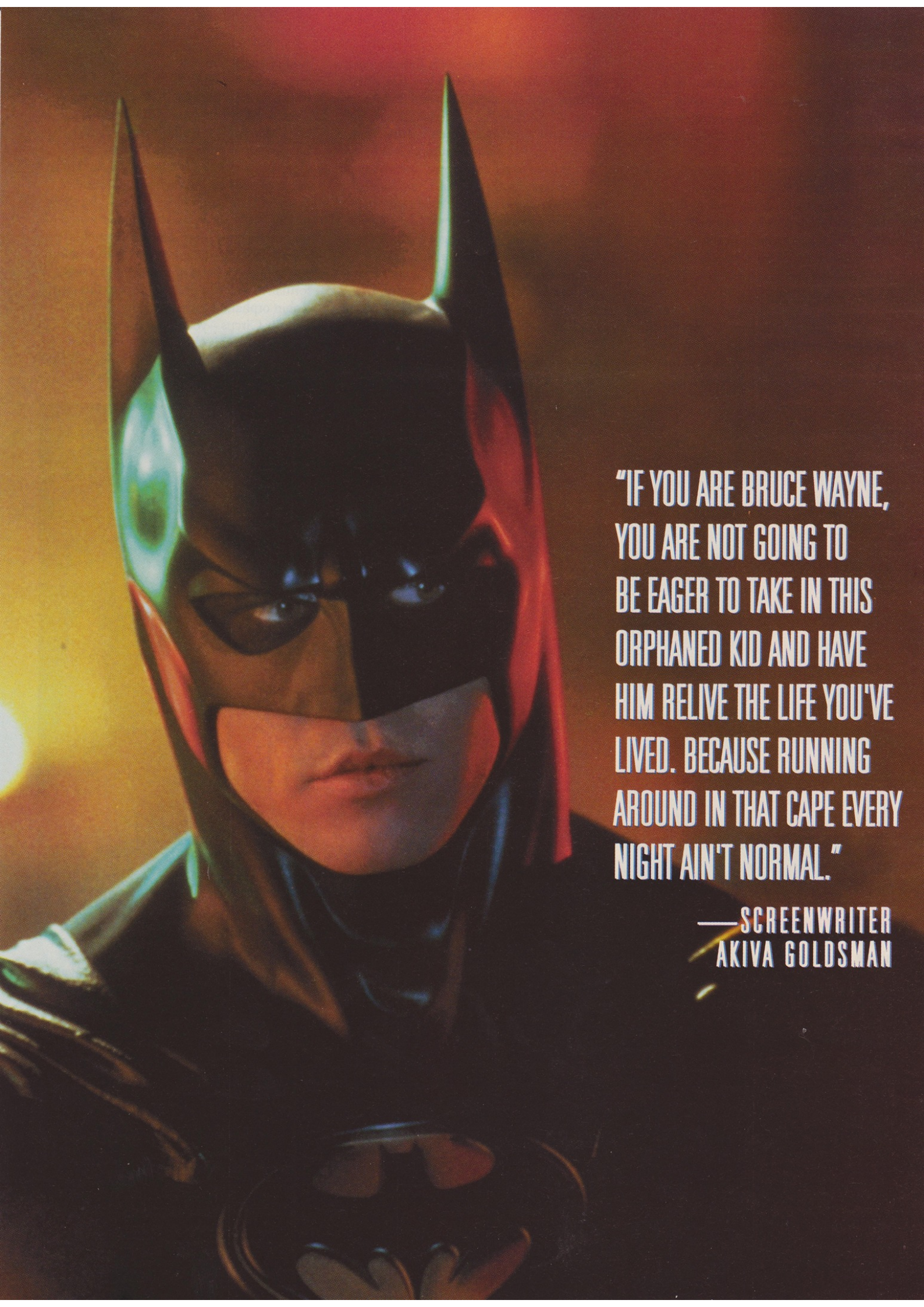
THE BROTHERS GRIM

Aside from being the director's nod to '90s morés and styles, such hip, if picayune, details lend some earthiness to a pair of characters who are barely tethered to reality. In the case of Dick Grayson/Robin, played by Chris O'Donnell, the earring is just the beginning: Schumacher determined that a complete wardrobe and personality makeover was in order (see sidebar, page 27).

"Joel was convinced from the start that a kind of acolyte, neophyte Robin—the blue-eyed, eager-to-please 12- or 14-year-old of the comic books—was not at all what the world wanted to see," says Akiva Goldsman. "He saw Robin as a gypsy: This is a kid who's traveled around the country with a circus. He is not impressed by Bruce Wayne. He is not impressed by the high-society world of Gotham City. As Joel and I worked together on this, we realized something that would be very exciting and very different from the comic books: If you are Bruce Wayne, and you witness an echo of the event that was formative in terms of your life—in this case, Robin orphaned violently at the Gotham Charity Circus—you're not going to be eager to take this child in and have him relive the life you've lived. Because, let's face it, going out and running around in that cape every night ain't normal."

Schumacher clarifies: "You're always trying to save a younger person from making the same mistakes that you did. Because Bruce Wayne is dealing with the fact that he has become a person who is a vigilante at night, he perhaps wishes for Dick Grayson a saner, more sober road."

But that doesn't necessarily mean Easy Street. In fact, after Wayne offers Grayson shelter in the wake of the circus attack, the air between them becomes fairly antagonistic. "We've created a kind of reluctant partnership for them—one that's resonant in terms of how people actually get together in life," says Goldsman. "It's never, 'Gee, okay, why don't you just join up and we'll do it


"IF YOU ARE BRUCE WAYNE, YOU ARE NOT GOING TO BE EAGER TO TAKE IN THIS ORPHANED KID AND HAVE HIM RELIVE THE LIFE YOU'VE LIVED. BECAUSE RUNNING AROUND IN THAT CAPE EVERY NIGHT AIN'T NORMAL."
—SCREENWRITER AKIVA GOLDSMAN

together?' It's push me, pull you for a while."

Chris O'Donnell, who beat out a short list of Dick Grayson candidates that reportedly included Leonardo DiCaprio (*What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, *The Quick and the Dead*), feels that the dynamic of the Batman and Robin relationship changed significantly when he and Kilmer came aboard. "It was suddenly more big brother-little brother," says O'Donnell, 25, who watched the TV series in reruns as a youth. "Originally, Robin was written younger—it was almost like a father-son type of film."

The actor, reluctant either to delve too deeply into their psychology or reveal more of the plot, hesitates when asked if the characters are partners in alienation. "Let's put it this way," he says. "Robin doesn't like Batman at the beginning, and they're standing together at the end—defending the city."

The key visual cue for their bond in the concluding moments of *Batman Forever* is Robin's new uniform. "It's a black, rubberized suit sculpted to look similar to Batman's," says Bob Kane. "It's not like my red-and-green costume with the yellow cape. I guess he's more menacing now. He's really like a junior Batman."

"If you have a secret identity, you can't go to a tailor to have those suits made," reasons Schumacher. "So I thought, 'If the person who made the Batsuit is making the Robin suit, wouldn't they make it similar?'"

Regardless, the suit suited O'Donnell just fine—as did the role in general. Although some of Dick Grayson's acrobatics and fisticuffs were handled by former multi-medal-winning Olympic gymnast Mitch Gaylord (*American Anthem*) under the guidance of stunt coordinator Conrad Palmisano (*Under Siege*, *The Cowboy Way*), a production source says O'Donnell did "a lot of his own stunts ... at least those he could get away with before the insurance people came in and said, 'No way.'"

"Chris worked very hard at it," says Schumacher. "The integrity and honesty that he has are God-given."

O'Donnell, who played D'Artagnan in 1993's *The Three Musketeers*, shrugs off the effort. "I'm good at faking it on camera," he says. "This Robin is a pretty tough guy. He tracks Harvey/Two-Face down and has a big battle scene with him. It's not every day you get to beat the crap out of Tommy Lee Jones. It's great. I love making movies."

BAT COMPANY

To be sure, there's nothing like bashing an inspired villain. And *Batman Forever* has a pair of them in Two-Face and the Riddler—played, no less, by two of today's top box-office draws: Tommy Lee Jones and Jim Carrey, respectively.

Schumacher, who wanted new baddies and never suggested resurrecting Michelle Pfeiffer's Catwoman (seen alive in the final frame of *Batman Returns*), is bullish on this Dastardly Duo. "One of the thrills of *Batman* is the outrageousness of the villains," he says. "Imagine how great it is every morning to get up and go to work with Tommy Lee Jones playing Harvey/Two-Face and Jim Carrey playing the Riddler. You don't direct them—you just get out of the way."

Akiva Goldsman, who insists that the actors' spirited improvising caused no frantic rewrites, adds: "I was on set day after day, and when an idea came up, we'd just do it. Everyone—including Val, Nicole and Chris—had a very good instinct. When the script is sound, it gives you an opportunity to move around a little bit within the lines. And we had a great time doing that."

Having previously directed a more staid Jones in *The Client*, Schumacher relished the idea of exposing the 48-year-old actor's wild side like never before in *Batman*'s ultimate dual role. Jones' decision to play Two-Face, according to the director, apparently had more to do with the actor's 12-year-old son, Austin, than anything else. "When I went to meet with Tommy to do my spiel to get him to do the role, I got there and Austin had a pile of Batman comics with Two-Face on top. Tommy told me he's doing the character because it's Austin's favorite."

With Jones signed, the director was halfway toward his goal of a funnier film. "We've tried to add a lot of humor to *Batman*," he says. "They *are* called 'comic' books, so I encouraged Tommy's natural outrageousness. Instead of Harvey/Two-Face just being conservative on one side and insane on the other, he's now conservative on one side and *outrageously* insane on the other. The trouble with taking him from a comic book into a movie is that he's a very tortured soul who lives in the shadows: Even though he has two faces, the character can be very one-note. So we chose to make him less the Phantom of the Opera and give him a more theatrical flair; he's quite a clothes horse on one half of his body. And he has a girlfriend for each side—Sugar and Spice [Drew Barrymore and Debi Mazar]. Tommy has done a very personalized version of Harvey/Two-Face, and I couldn't see anybody [else] in the role."

When reminded that audiences did see someone else in the role—Billy Dee Williams played the pre-deformed Gotham City D.A. Harvey Dent six years ago in *Batman*—the director, as when commenting on Keaton, turns painstakingly diplomatic. "I am a great Billy Dee Williams fan," he says, "and I see Billy Dee Williams as a real leading man. I don't see him as the most evil, psychotic killer in Gotham City. I mean, he's a wonderful actor; I'm sure he could play it. But because he had never played Harvey/Two-Face really—he played Harvey Dent—I decided to go with Tommy."

SUIT YOURSELF: Chris O'Donnell (Robin) ponders the pre-latex look for sidekicks

Schumacher's decision to go with 33-year-old Jim Carrey as the Riddler, just before he hit the box-office stratosphere in *The Mask* and *Dumb and Dumber*, certainly was a smart one. The putty-faced Toronto native, who turned down $18 million to star in a fantasy film called *The Thief of Santa Monica* last winter, will earn a mere $5 million for the key supporting role—which, rumor had it, Robin Williams nixed because it was less comedic and more intellectual than the character played by the TV series' Frank Gorshin.

"There have been a lot of rumors that

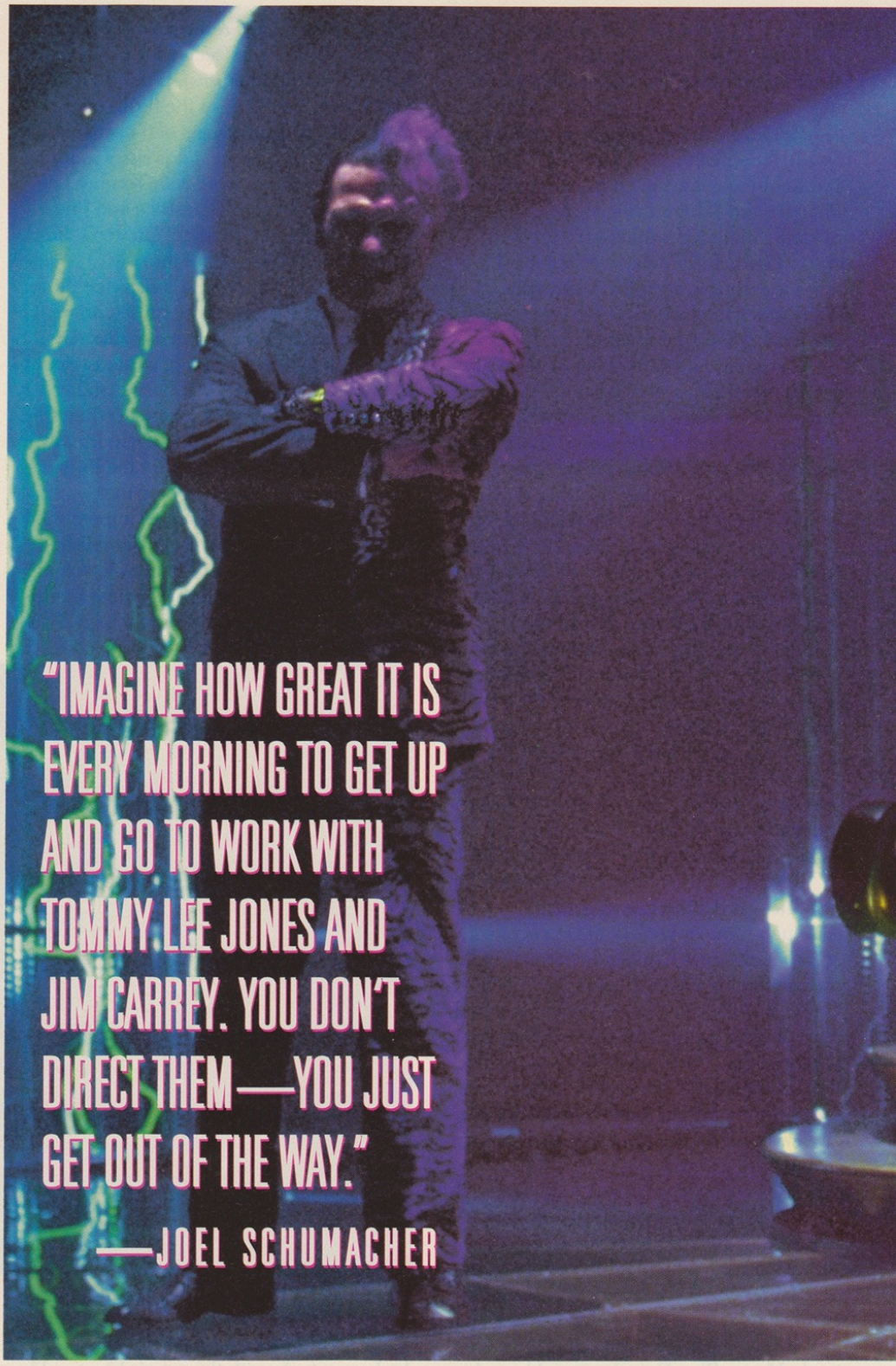
have nothing to do with reality," Schumacher laments. "One of them had Val and Jim feuding—a month before we even started shooting! Journalists kept calling me to say, 'What's this about Val and Jim on the set?' I would say, 'There is no set. We haven't started shooting yet!' So one of them says, 'Then they're fighting during rehearsals.' I said, 'There is no rehearsal.' And they said, 'No, no, no—I have an eyewitness who was in the rehearsal and saw them fighting.' I said, 'There's no rehearsal. Jim's father died; he's in Toronto. We had to cancel it.' They went, 'Oh.' That seemed to be proof to them."

The director, despite the silly gossip, is ecstatic over how the irrepressibly questioning baddie turned out—as is creator Kane, who compares Carrey's work to Jack Nicholson's unhinged performance as the Joker in *Batman*. But according to an anecdote related by Chris O'Donnell in March, folks on the set got a little, uh, Carrey'd away with the box-office Boy Wonder: "Everyone would just stare and wait for him to say something funny. The minutes would tick by, and people were hovering and watching him. One day, Jim said, 'Hey, can I have a Diet Coke?' and 10 people started roaring."

Although juggling all of these potent personalities was a risky and difficult job, screenwriter Goldsman feels that the audience will get more Bat for the buck. "Ensemble pieces are particularly well suited to *Batman* because, in a funny way, different characters can represent different tones. So having a variety of them—if they are well drawn, aptly cast, well directed and well acted—not only moves you from character to character, but from tone to tone."

"I like ensemble because life is an ensemble," says Schumacher, a rabid Robert Altman fan whose filmography (which includes the genre items *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* and *Flatliners*) falls almost entirely within that category. "I'm not partial to directing stories about one person going through one thing for two hours."

The director dismisses any suggestion that the villains will upstage the hero in *Batman Forever*, as they did in Tim Burton's films. "I certainly think that everyone is very, very strong in the piece. But the secret of ensemble is making sure all those strong characters have their aria ... their time."



A HUE TO A THRILL

The shepherd of the ensemble must have his aria, too, and that is the film itself. "The old [adage], 'Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery,' is something I consider a great insult," says Schumacher, who has avoided doing sequels to his own hit movies and is tired of speculation about how he will tie Part Three to Parts One and Two. "When you imitate someone, you insult [everyone involved]. And when people imitate something, they always miss what was special about it in the first place.

"So I didn't involve myself in the first two movies. I didn't reread the reviews and I didn't run the films again. I did not ask Tim Burton, 'Why did you do this and why did you do that?' I wasn't asked to do the third of Tim's movies. And I didn't think those works needed to be corrected."

Schumacher, instead, went to the print incarnations for inspiration. "I drenched myself in hundreds of comic books," he says. "Batman has been around since 1939, and there are so many great artists and writers who have worked with the character—especially in the last 10 years. I had a field day.

"My goal, with deference to what Tim had already created, was to make a living comic book," the director continues. "You know when you're reading a great comic book and suddenly they'll do a whole sequence all in one hue—like magenta or blue? You know how comic books take great license with color and with dynamics? Well, I wanted us to try to attempt that as best we could. I wanted people to have an experience of a Batman comic, and I wanted to make it fun."

Schumacher & Co.'s pseudo-liberation from the rest of the film series fostered a heady creative freedom. "Because we weren't part of anything that had gone before, it was very fresh to us. I was able to do a brand-new car and a brand-new city. Gotham City doesn't suddenly look like all crystal and jewels or anything; what I actually tried to do was blend every decade from the '30s on up through the year 2000."

Bob Kane, for one, is elated by the revisions. "As creative consultant, I take the scripts and give my opinion as to what I think will work or won't work. Tim Burton listened to about 30 to 40 percent of my opinions, as did Joel Schumacher. And Joel, like Tim, has caught the visual. The sets are magnificent, if not better, than those in the first two movies. They're spectacular—like Cecil B. DeMille."

If Cecil were still around, he'd probably have production designer Barbara Ling under exclusive contract. Incorporating some of the more striking design touches of both Anton Furst (*Batman*) and Bo Welch (*Batman Returns*), her contributions ranged from models and miniatures (John Dykstra oversaw the film's approximately 200 visual FX shots, which include computer graphic effects) to the outside statuary at the Gotham Charity Circus (realized by head sculptor Yarek Alfer from polyurethane foam) to the two-story Batcave and Wayne Manor sets built inside the mammoth geodesic dome in Long Beach, Calif., that once housed Howard Hughes' Spruce Goose.

Code-named "Blinko" at that site and others to keep the press at bay, *Batman Forever* didn't require a set as sprawling as Gotham Plaza in *Batman Returns*—the series' largest. Instead, it has 60 major sets (compared to Part Two's 20) that are designed to give the Bat-environs greater scale. For the first time, most Gotham City shots that are supposed to be exteriors *are* exteriors—captured on location in Los Angeles and in the real Gotham, New York City. According to an insider, an entire back alley was painted Day-Glo colors and black-lit, resembling "an LSD hallucination."

Ling also designed or redesigned the Bat transports, including the Batwing, the Batboat and the Batmobile. Kane got revved up when he first spied the new car. "It's more modernized, more futuristic," he says. "The skin of it is like a plastic and you can almost see through it. It's marvelous." Val Kilmer also thought the newly redesigned Batmobile was cool: "I asked [for] one, but no one has answered me yet."

Not so cool for Kilmer and Chris O'Donnell were costume designer Bob Ringwood's rubberized superhero suits, which lacked ventilation. O'Donnell hated wearing his glued-on mask the most. "It sweats, but it doesn't drip until you touch it—and then the sweat just kind of dribbles down. The makeup person's there trying to pad you, and you're just so miserable. I'd rather sit in the costume all day than have that mask on for an hour."

O'Donnell was nonetheless impressed by the craftsmanship of the *Batman Forever* costume shop, which he says is "the size of a grocery store. They really should do a documentary on it; it's unbelievable. I started going last July to get my entire body mold done—they poured plaster over my whole body, my head. Then I went in for other fittings. It was a slow process. When they finally put me in the costume six months later, I was like, Holy shit. It was scary."

Did O'Donnell's girlfriend, who videotaped the initial body casting, ask for a souvenir mold? "She wanted the codpiece," he says with a smirk. "I said, 'Don't worry about that, honey. You know that's just actual size. There's no padding involved there.'"

WINGING IT

There was no padding involved in O'Donnell's schedule, either. The studious performer completed a semester of college during the shoot—writing papers in his dressing trailer and attending classes at UCLA four

nights a week. "We'd wrap in Long Beach at seven, and then my class would start at 7:30. I had to rush up the 405 Freeway to get to UCLA, but I always showed up late; my teachers had no idea who I was. Before Christmas, with final exams, I'd be up all night writing papers, then getting up early and trying to fit in workouts. I was exhausted."

O'Donnell was awed by Kilmer's abundant energy and professionalism. "He's a real classically trained actor. He gets what he wants and he's happy with himself." But Batman's quiet speaking voice was, according to the younger thespian, occasionally problematic. "It was funny to be doing scenes with Val, because if you were far away it was like, 'What? What was that?' You don't want to say anything because he's acting; you don't want to [affect] his concentration."

Nothing, it seems, could have jarred Joel Schumacher's concentration. "There's something puzzling about the way his mind works," says Akiva Goldsman, who lauds cinematographer Stephen Goldblatt and composer Elliot Goldenthal (replacing longtime Bat-musician Danny Elfman) for supporting and fortifying the director's vision. "All of the variables of what can be done—the range of motion for a character, for a scene and for the camera—operate simultaneously in Joel's head. Any adjustment that is necessary, and often takes other directors a tremendously long time, Joel just knows how to do the moment he walks in and looks."

"Candidly, I think he did as well as Tim Burton, if not better," says Bob Kane (see Editorial, page 6). "Joel has a real hook on it. He pays more attention to the actors, where Tim pays more attention to the sets."

Kane also was impressed by Schumacher's on-set demeanor. "He's very accommodating, very extroverted, where Tim is more introverted. I was sitting right next to him for most of the shoot, and he good-naturedly called me a 'yenta'—which means someone who butts in all the time. All in all, it was a very happy shoot." A Warner Bros. source chimes: "Nobody's good humor ever flagged on this film."

Least of all the ringmaster's. But did he receive any moral support from producer and pal Burton? "Tim's always been a supporter of mine," says Schumacher, "though I didn't see him or speak to him much because he was working on *Ed Wood* and other projects. No, he wasn't calling me every day and saying, 'Go get 'em, Tiger!'"

"Tiger" got 'em just the same, bringing *Batman Forever* in on time and, incredibly, under budget. "I know, it's hard to believe," Schumacher says, stopping short of declaring, "There but for the grace of God go I" as he mulls the birth pangs of what likely will be his movie's main late-summer competitor, *Waterworld*. "We must owe them some karma. It seems like we got blessed and they got cursed. But the proof is in the pudding."

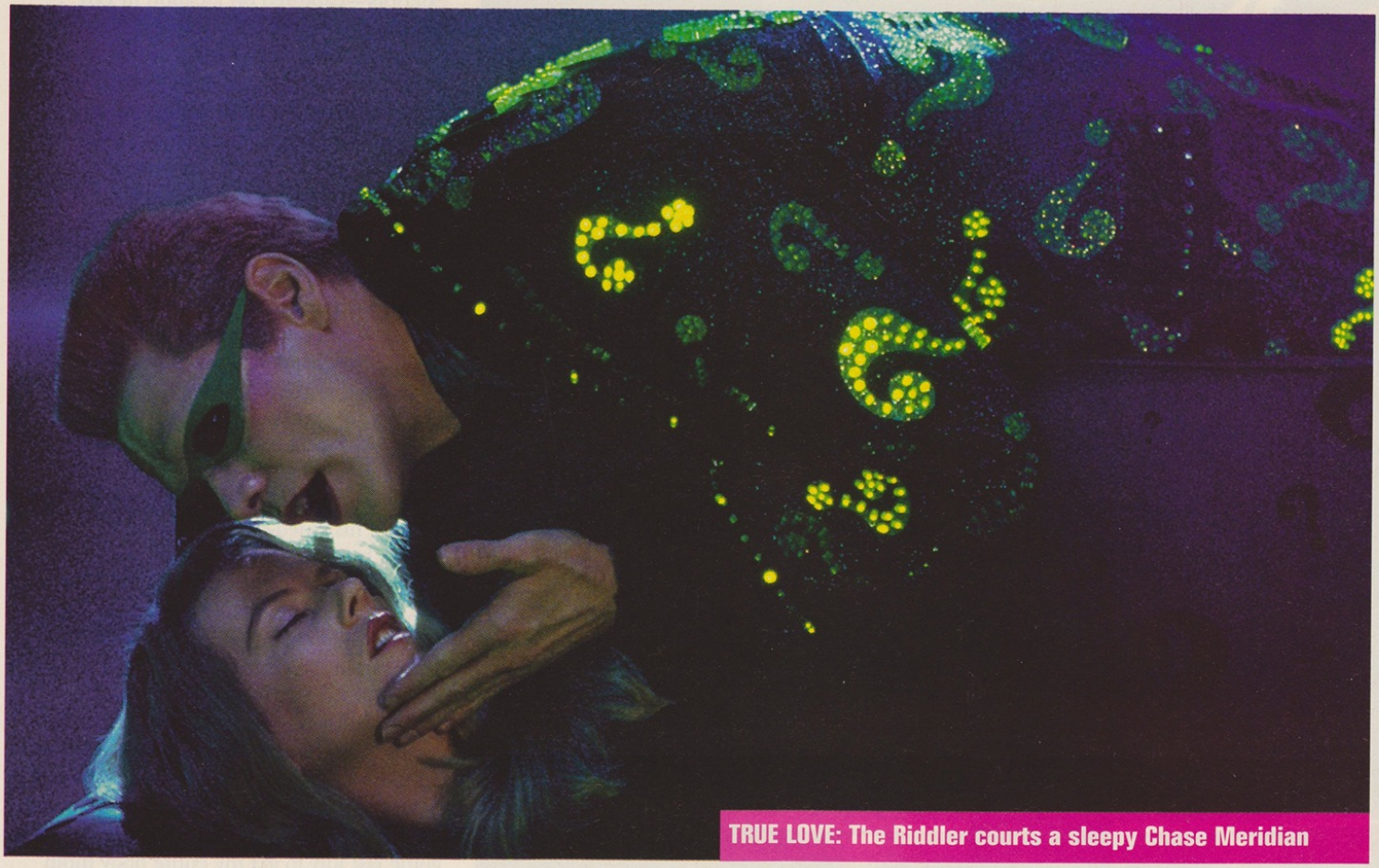
For Schumacher, the good-luck charm may have been the large tree that he had the prop department erect in front of the facade for Arkham Asylum. It's a gnarled wonder modeled after one that appears in the graveyard sequence of David Lean's classic 1946 adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*—a film that was highly influential on the filmmaker as a youth. The Gothic creepiness of the asylum set itself, perhaps, helped Schumacher stave off insanity as the magnitude of his two-year task dawned.

"When Bob Daly and Terry Semel came to me and said, 'We're prepared to offer you the corporation's largest asset,' they weren't being cute: The *Batman* movies have made almost a billion dollars [worldwide] and the merchandising has made over a billion. I had to take a lot of phone calls at home and while filming; somebody was always showing me something, 20 times a day that had to be approved. I'm not naive, but I had no idea that there were so many people involved with the merchandising and licensing—that just the concept of a new *Batman* movie [would result in] so much traveling and so many meetings. ..."

The director sighs. "Yeah," he amends, "I was naive."

Yet even weighing all of that, Schumacher remains true to unflappable form—preferring to think of *Batman Forever* as a grand adventure rather than his biggest career challenge. "I guess if you look at it logistically—the longest shooting schedule, the biggest budget, the largest sets, the most amount of sets—yeah, it was a huge challenge; I just didn't expect to have as much fun as I did making it. Now I'm hoping that fun will translate to you."

And make us Batfans forever. ◆



TRUE LOVE: The Riddler courts a sleepy Chase Meridian